DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 704 LI 003 213

AUTHOR	Paton, M. W.; Eastwood, C. R.
TITLE	Mobilemeet '71.
INSTITUTION	Library Association, London (England). Branch and Mobile Libraries Group.
PUB DATE	Aug 71
NOTE	21p.; (10 References); Papers presented at a joint meeting of the Branch and Mobile Libraries Group and the County Library Circle, held at Dumfries, 24 April 1971
AVAILABLE FROM	Hon. Publications Officer, County Branch Library, West Walk, Yate, Bristol, England ($.65)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Bookmobiles; Foreign Countries; *Library Planning; *Library Programs; *Library Services
IDENTIFIERS	*Great Britain

ABSTRACT

The two papers in this document are: (1) "Culture in the Craft" and (2) "Management Aspects of Mobile Libraries." "Culture in the Craft" reviews the problems of providing library services in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Bookmobiles are used to serve library users that live in farms near the road. Other library users are served by a cooperative program that involves the readers desiring library materials to convene at one location such as a neighborhood farm or at the local post office. The paper "Management Aspects of Mobile Libraries" concentrates on the application of modern management techniques to improve library services. (Author/MM)

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Branch and Mobile Libraries Group
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

ED056704
LI 003 213

MOBILEMEET '71

Papers presented at a joint meet of the Branch and Mobile Libraries Group and the County Library Circle, held at Dumfries on Saturday 24th April 1971.

1. Culture in the Croft, by M.W. Paton, County Librarian of Renfrew.

2. Management Aspects of Mobile Libraries, by C.R. Eastwood, County Librarian of Somerset.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Branch and Mobile Libraries Group of the Library Association.

August 1971.

EDO 28

SBN: 85365 071 3

CULTURE IN THE CROFT, by M.W. Paton, County Librarian, Renfrewshire.

Aberdeenshire is a wedge-shaped County of some 200 square miles, the broad end of which juts into the cold north sea to form the nose of Scotland, while the point penetrates into the Cairngorms to the west of Braemar. The tip is Highland, the southern edge along Royal Deeside tends to be laird's land, with ill-divided wealth and depopulation, the fringe of this area is of grassy hills and provides good sheep farming, and all the rest, by and large, is good, flat or rolling, farming land. More than half of Aberdeenshire supports large, modern, efficient farms. It is open, exposed, treeless country, and in winter when the isobars are vertical and close together, how the north wind hits it and how the snow piles up and later takes on a hard, metallic quality and stays for months! The people are of the soil and are staunch, honest and homely, with a tremendous sense of humour, most of it directed against themselves.

The tradional pattern of County Library service with branches in the towns and centres in rural schools, continued unchanged in Aberdeenshire into the mid-sixties. The urban population served by branches was around 25,000 and issues were 8 per head, which was not particularly good. The rural population served from static centres was 80,000 and issues per head were 1.6, which was atrocious. Even allowing that a sizeable proportion of those who lived in the sparsely populated areas borrowed from branches in the towns, the rural service was ineffective. It did not even have the negative virtue of economy, for we were involved in a very heavy centre exchange programme and each book exchanged was issued only twice on average.

But we all know the disadvantages of small static centres:-

limited stock,
restricted opening hours,
continuity broken by school holidays,
inconvenience to people who do not live near the centre,
psychological resistance among many people to any service provided under school auspices,
and large numbers of books locked up for all but an hour or so a week.

In any case, the closure of rural schools was reducing the number of service points.

So in 1966 we compiled a 10,000 word document entitled "Report on progress and proposals for future development", recommending the replacement or improvement of existing branches, the establishment of five new branches, a fresh staffing structure, and a scheme for serving the rural areas, which is the subject of today's talk.

The rural service would be in two-parts:
(a) a mobile service for those who lived in or near the road, and
(b) a family book service for those whose homes were too remote to be served economically by van.

The Buchan area in the north-east of the County is the only part with a reasonably high incidence of villages. Consequently we planned to serve Buchan with a mobile branch staffed by a chartered librarian with a driver/assistant, and a travelling library operated by an unqualified driver/librarian. For the remainder of the County, in which settlement is predominantly scattered, we felt that three dual purpose vehicles somewhat larger than the standard travelling library but operated by a single driver/librarian would be suitable.

The scheme, which was phased over five years, was approved by the Committee, and we moved, literally, into the field. We did a preliminary survey and I remember the doubts and emotions which resulted from it. How much was it going to cost in time and fuel and wear and tear to exchange a couple of books, where was the van to turn and what of the winter - in our troubled state of mind we could see the van lying askew in every other ditch! The little villages were no problem but the rural hinterland seemed a mobiler's nightmare.

However, we had circulars distributed by the schools, with a tear-off portion on which prospective readers might indicate whether they wanted to use the service, describe the actual location of their house and tell whether they could meet the van at a pre-arranged time at a road end or at any group of houses. A surprisingly high number of these was completed, and we plotted the results on a map. The

map then showed that many people wanted to read, but although we looked at it from every conceivable angle, it did not show a route, programme, or means of serving any reasonable number in one day.

Then two things happened. Firstly we received a letter from a prospective reader telling that some half-dozen of her "neighbours" would meet the van at her home, and secondly we learned that many people called at the local post office daily when the mail arrived at 10.30 a.m.

This changed the situation sufficiently to allow the service to start and within three months it was highly successful and gave us no problems apart from the large numbers of people who had not completed the form but who wished to use the service as soon as it was operating.

So, even at this very early stage, a few patterns and principles were beginning to emerge which later experience only served to confirm.

1) There were readers everywhere - far more than could be pinpointed by a preliminary survey, and so the initial timetable should be loose and allow for the inclusion of many additional readers.

2) Mobile service was feasible, and most of the problems would be resolved by the exercise on both sides of common sense and a readiness to come and go.

While this pilot scheme was settling in another development was taking shape at headquarters. The White Paper "Policy for the Arts" had suggested that local authorities should be more active in promoting interest in music and the visual arts. In a rural area the County Library is probably the best organisation for this purpose, and consequently we compiled a scheme for dispensing gramophone records, framed art reproductions and visual aids. It was a five year scheme which would tie in with the overall five year development plan and we looked towards having fully 5,000 records and towards 1,000 framed prints at the end of it. There were two major principles, first that this would be free of charge to the borrower and second that these materials would be available from every County

Library service unit-branch or mobile.

So the first mobile was designed to take books, prints and records with a boot for the family book service cartons. The framed prints were protected by transparent bags and housed in troughs built at two levels over a wheel box. Some 20 - 24 prints were carried, and were held in place by expanding curtain wire. Browser boxes were placed below the rear window for some 160 records, which came to no harm from vibration, sunlight, or any other cause.

The van was a three ton Ford with engine behind the driver. Floor levels between cabin and van were no great problem, and a neat counter for one person was built between the side entrance and cabin. Since this was to be a dual purpose vehicle, its length was restricted to 19', its width was 7'. Book capacity was rather more than 1,200 and its total stock, including books on loan, was ultimately 5,000.

In time, the van took to the road with a driver/librarian on a programme of four-weekly calls in the rural areas (for 1-3 families), fortnightly calls to small communities (4-40 families) and weekly stops at the few large villages with more than 40 family borrowers. Within a matter of weeks it became clear that economic operation of the fortnightly and weekly service required two staff, and for a year it served communities with two staff on two days, and the rural calls with one staff over the remainder of the week. On this basis, issues were 72,500 books, 3,500 records and 250 art reproductions.

The second van was a two ton Commer on which a successful travelling library was built with record browser boxes over one wheel box and print troughs over the other. Its overall dimensions were 17' long and 6'9" wide and it carried a shelved stock of rather more than 1,000 books, along with some 20 prints and 160 records. This vehicle, staffed by a driver/librarian, did constant rural work over an extended area, and the Ford was then used exclusively for community service with two staff.

In fact, the original scheme for serving both communities and scattered areas with dual purpose vehicles had been found impracticable and uneconomic, and we now planned to have a mobile branch and a travelling library serving in each area.

The Bedford was later brought into full-time mobile service, a five ton vehicle now serves the Buchan villages and another small van will complement it in a year's time.

Some aspects of the operation of the service may be worth recording.

Finding the readers. At various times, in different areas and in every case with only partial success we tried:

(a) Seeking the assistance of the school teachers. (Results varied according to the involvement or disinterest of the teacher in his community).
(b) Advertising in the local paper (Response, negligible).
(c) Sending reply-paid post cards with a description of the service. (A mountain of work for a molehill of result).
(d) Personal prospecting. (Generally returned physically and emotionally exhausted, with as many readers as might be served by bicycle).

Latterly we questioned the need for preliminary surveys, particularly as no method was more than 20% effective. The village stops could be pinpointed with reasonable certainty whether or not the area had been surveyed, and rural reticence was quickly overcome by the appearance of the van coupled with an excellent bush telegraph system. In any case the four-weekly schedule was subject to constant revision.

Timetables. The travelling library operated during office hours, to the apparent satisfaction of everyone. The village timetable, however, involved compromise between staff and public convenience. Although morning and evening stops were busy and books were borrowed by wives for husbands, it was noticeable that a higher proportion of men's books was issued at evening stops. We considered recruiting part-time staff for evening work, for service reasons and also to allow fuller use of staff, but we settled in the end, reluctantly, for two evening calls per week.

Charging. The charges were carried in boxes, and the family ticket system was used, with a date card entered only for books held beyond the first issue

period. An incidental and very important advantage in the travelling library was that the charges showed the order of the journey to a driver doing sickness or holiday relief.

Stock. Since the proportion of books on loan was 4/1, a first-rate stock and heavy representation of popular titles was essential. Some 60/80 books were exchanged weekly when the vans called at headquarters.

Stock location was a minor problem. Despite discouragement, readers would change from one van to another, and this lead to the abandonment of location of stock against individual vans. A common location for all vans serving the same areas is now practised.

Staff. The unqualified staff were magnificent. They very soon appreciated the objectives of the service and got to know stock, readers and reading interests. Being local people they had no difficulty in relating the service to the local situation.

Bases. The vans were based on County Council Roads Depots central to the areas served. That they were not based on local branches was due largely to the absence of local branches, but centralisation on headquarters - where they called weekly - had advantages in stock and request servicing and for timetable, family book service and other purposes.

Difficulties. A mobile service creates more problems than a branch service, in terms of timetabling (which in rural service needs constant adjustment), emergency relief staffing (which would be an acute problem were it not for family book charging) and van breakdowns, M.O.T. test, etc. As a last resort a travelling library can be used in place of a mobile branch, and a delivery van in place of a travelling library, but this calls for a high degree of tolerance on the part of both readers and staff. A reserve vehicle is the only satisfactory safeguard.

Family Book Service. This was pioneered in Orkney and we found limited but real use for it. 32 families are served at present. For each, a box of some 12 - 20 books selected to meet their particular reading interests, is left for exchange at a

pre-arranged spot, which in practice may be a shop, house, smithy or below a particular beech tree!. As the ultimate means of putting books in isolated houses, this scheme works.

Gramophone Records. Stylus inspection was impossible and only visual inspection of returned records is practicable. Nevertheless, the damage rate was not significant except perhaps in the early stages when greasy or muddy thumbprints were prevalent. Interest level tended to be popular, with folk and Scottish music outweighing classical. The ratio of record to book issues showed an unaccountable variation between vans, but at an average of 1/20 was the same as that of the branches.

Art Prints. This seemed a minority service in that only one print was issued to every 12 records or 200 books. However, since only one print was lent per family and the loan period was two months renewable for a further two months, there would be a print in every 8 or thereabouts of the houses served. Landscapes and "recognisable" paintings, lively Breughels and colourful Van Goghs were popular. Abstracts were ridiculed, Rembrandt's were too dull (perhaps for the wall-paper?) and the Dutch domestic scenes were not like home!

Evaluation. Overall the record and print services were worthwhile. £ for £ they were more effective than concert or art gallery provision. The major limiting factor was the inability of the users to appreciate to the full the materials which were available to them. We wrote descriptive notes behind the frame of each print, and published listeners' guides to classics and jazz, (as also readers' guides to novels of various kinds) but we recognised a greater need than we could satisfy for guidance and indeed education in art, music and literature.

Quantitative use was encouraging in the extreme. A mobile branch would issue in one year 90,000 books, 4,000 records and 200 prints; its travelling library would issue 43,000 books, 2,600 records and 400(!) prints. As compared with static centre service, book issues increased five-fold, non-fiction reading six-fold and requests ten-fold.

But the effect of a mobile service - as of any library service - cannot be expressed statistically.

To me, mobile service is a fresh-faced woman clambering aboard a van with a bundle of books under one arm and a child under another. It is a child sat down among the picture books. It is a crofter going off with a book on pigs; countless dogs with muddy paws; many a joke, many a country yarn and many a cheerful "Thank you!"

It is countless country people, with little in the way of amenity, interest or stimulus in their lives who now, when the tea is over and the dishes washed, have a book to turn to and a couple of new records to play and in many cases a new picture to look at, sometimes with full appreciation of what the writer or composer or artist was expressing, sometimes with only partial, but surely as time goes on, increasing communication and satisfaction.

It would be easy to underestimate the effect of the rural mobile service on those who live in the country and produce our food. Indeed, there are not many privileged to give as much to those in need, as the person who operates a rural mobile service.

MANAGEMENT ASPECTS OF MOBILE LIBRARIES, by C.R. Eastwood.

Like many other senior local government officers I have been subjected to a good deal of pressure in recent years to consider how modern ideas on management can best help me to improve the library service which I administer. Initially, as a fairly old hand, I was sceptical about management. However, I now find myself, rather surprisingly, converted and fairly definitely persuaded that management has a science, has something to offer us. I am not sure how the conversion took place, nor how permanent it is, but I think I can say that I am not ordinarily prone to accept new ideas easily. In fact, my former colleagues in West Riding County Library often remind me of the time when I was completely opposed to the idea of the mobile library supplanting the village library!

I was a sceptic about mobile libraries and was converted. I acquired all the fervour commonly attributed to the convert. I have not yet worked up a fervour about management, but I have a feeling that it will come.

What has impressed me most about the application of management techniques is the possibility of using more analytical approaches to library problems. This will benefit us in identifying problems, in defining alternative solutions to them, in selecting which of the alternatives is best and in implementing them and controlling the result.

We have one of the most difficult and intractable problems in librarianship; that is, the provision of a library service to areas of low population density and we need all the help we can get to solve it. We have no difficulty in identifying this problem - it faces us every day or our working life, but I wonder if we have investigated sufficiently thoroughly the alternative means of providing a library service in this area?

There are three basic management techniques which can help us to examine and analyse our activities. These are:

1. Operational research
2. Programme budgeting
3. Cost/benfit analysis.

But before we consider these, the first thing we

must do is to define the overall basic objectives of the public library service.

Now this is difficult because it would seem that our objectives have never really been satisfactorily outlined. We have had a flood of acts, reports, etc., but none has been able to sum up what our job is supposed to be. Personally I think there is a great deal to be said for the simple slogan, easy to say and remember. I do not especially like the slogan which has had some vogue - "The right book to the right reader at the right time." I prefer "The best books to the most people at the least cost." This underlines for me the basic objectives of public librarianship. The best books, indicating the necessity for selection, for quality, for discrimination. The most people, to me means the need for the extension of the library into the lives of more people, demonstating the evangelical nature of our work. And lastly, the least cost. This, to me, means that all our work must be scrutinised carefully to ensure that we are making the very best use of our resources.

The total gross expenditure on public library services in the United Kingdom is so small comparatively that we are not likely to be scrutinised with the same intensity that may be given to more expensive services, such as education. After all, the savings which can potentially be made or the extra efficiency which can be gained is so much less. All the more reason why we should ourselves look more closely at our work, and as far as possible from the detached viewpoint of the outside observer and particularly through the eyes of the management specialist.

The outside consultant would, I believe, dispel two fallacies about the mobile library service.

1. That a mobile library service is expensive.
2. That a mobile service is necessarily a more superficial service than a static service.

I have recently had to carry out a small project of programme budgeting on library work. This means working out exactly the costs of a particular function. It was done in the first instance for the Planning Officer and covered one area only of the county which included two independent library areas

(population 65,000) and a rural area with some 64,000 population, of which some 50,000 have a mobile service, albeit from six different vehicles.

I am not concerned with the costs of the independent libraries though both services are readily available to county readers and are well used by them. The result of the analysis of costs showed that the 50,000 population borrowed 432,173 books from mobile libraries at a net cost of £20,109, or a cost per issue of 4.5p. The issue per head of population is of course rather low, as a good many readers in the area borrow from the independent town libraries or from the five county branches in the area.

An analysis of the branch costs show that 199,128 books were issued, though the local populations amounted to only 13,885. What did surprise me was that cost per issue came to 7.00p. The cost is perhaps higher than normal as the full-time branch had only a half year's working in enlarged premises, but this would not have reduced the unit cost by more than 10%. The four smaller branches are really only glorified village centres, though two are in shop premises of which we have a sole tenancy, and the other two are in village halls staffed from the main branch.

On these figures it seems to me quite clear that far from being expensive, the mobile service is cheap. Of course, I have only given the direct local costs and I have excluded the cost of 'back-up' services from the Headquarters library. There may be a case for saying that the back-up costs of mobiles are greater than for branches but I have no real evidence of this.

So much then for costs. They cannot of course be completely accurate and on reflection I think I may have underestimated the mobile library replacement costs, but not to an extent that would have materially affected the final result.

As one might expect, the actual annual costs of each mobile (staff of two) are roughly the same - £6,000, and the cost per issue seems to be very dependent on the total book issue of each vehicle. It seems to be very difficult to estimate the benefit to the reader of having books delivered more

or less to his door against the fact that this happens only fortnightly, compared with his urban cousin who has to fetch his books but has a variety of times to choose from to do this. I don't know how to measure these benefits, and management theories don't help me.

It is often said by the "anti-mobile" school that mobile readers take too many books from the vehicle each time. You will all know the stories of readers with wheelbarrows and suitcases (and some of them may be true) and the family issue method and proxy borrowing certainly encourage this. To find out what happens in my own library I asked my fifteen mobile librarians to carry out a check on one route for each vehicle, Route B (Tuesday) and to give me a list of the numbers of books on loan to each family. The results show that about six books per family is the average (all types) including children's books, (carried out in term time). What I should like to do, but it means a good deal more work, is to check the issue per family at one of my static libraries, as a comparison.

We can measure reading, or at least books borrowed, easily, but the quality of reading is of course much more difficult to evaluate. I am confident that my own mobile libraries are not merely employed in issuing light fiction. Certainly the NF% may be higher at static branches, but an analysis in Somerset showed that the NF% at branches of 26.5% was very little higher than the mobile proportion of 24.7%. What was rather surprising was that the children's issues on mobiles were 18.7% of total issues whereas at branches they were 15.4%. Clearly what one loses on the NF swings one gains on the children's roundabouts.

Somerset County Library
Mobile Library Service
Analysis of issue per family on Routes B (Tuesday)

Service	Total Issue on Rte B	Total Families on Rte B	Issue per family	Children's issue on Rte B	Families borrowing Children's books	Children's issue per family	Families borrowing 20 or more	Families borrowing 25 books or more
TL.1 Minehead	333	55	6.05	72	16	4.50	-	-
TL.2 Wiveliscombe	507	68	7.46	73	18	4.06	5	1
MBL.1 Yeovil	724	128	5.65	140	43	3.25	-	-
MBL.2 Keynsham	644	96	5.66	84	24	3.50	1	1
MBL.3 Wells	1236	181	6.83	238	53	4.49	2	1
MBL.4 Taunton	913	183	4.99	306	89	3.43	-	-
MBL.5 Clevedon	605	103	5.87	109	33	3.30	2	1
MBL.6 Frome	793	138	5.74	134	35	3.83	2	-
MBL.7 Wincanton	413	86	4.80	62	19	3.26	-	-
MBL.8 Williton	864	117	7.38	213	43	4.95	3	2
MBL.9 Chard	883	136	6.49	172	42	4.09	2	-
MBL.10 Radstock	800	142	5.62	161	48	3.35	1	1
MBL.11 Street	578	98	5.89	138	34	4.06	1	-
MBL.12 Winscombe	840	142	5.91	167	42	3.97	2	1
MBL.13 Martock	687	126	5.45	113	30	3.77	1	-
Totals	10820	1799	6.01	2182	569	3.83	22	8

Note: This is a sample only. It covers 1 route out of 9, i.e. about 11% of total issues of mobile libraries.

Somerset County Library
Mobile Libraries - Book Issues 1969/70

	Fiction	Childr-ens	Non-Fiction	Total	NF %
Exmoor	31,299	10,722	15,615	57,636	33.3
Wiveliscombe	40,919	10,300	15,473	66,692	27.4
Yeovil	92,380	25,809	27,987	146,176	23.3
Keynsham	81,042	21,202	24,769	127,013	23.4
Wells	76,625	22,033	24,754	123,412	24.4
Taunton	101,889	27,570	27,546	157,005	21.3
Clevedon	65,494	21,852	21,580	108,926	24.8
Frome	68,050	16,518	18,565	103,133	21.4
Wincanton	54,756	18,727	18,234	91,717	24.9
West Somerset	81,026	23,537	32,965	137,528	28.9
Chard	80,108	21,840	28,945	130,893	26.5
Radstock	80,733	22,561	20,187	123,481	20.0
Street	71,701	33,003	21,572	126,276	23.1
Winscombe	72,341	23,373	27,771	123,485	27.7
Martock	58,354	23,520	20,939	102,813	26.4
	1,056,717	322,567	346,902	1,726,186	24.7

The value of carrying out even a very modest piece of statistical investigation is that it focuses the library manager's attention on costs, and on facts, not speculation. It makes clear that the operating cost of a vehicle (excluding back-up costs) in 1970, is certainly about £6,000 p.a. and may be as high as £10,000 if all back-up costs are included. Statistical research underlines the need for utmost efficiency in operation without which scaree money resources will be squandered. It shows, however, that this applies with even more force to the provision of static libraries, especially when contemplating newly constructed buildings. Even the rather crude comparison of issue statistics can be profitable and I find in Somerset that both branch and mobile libraries themselves are usually very keen to see how they compare with other service points.

I am not suggesting that there is any certain or definitive way to evaluate the alternative means of providing a library service. But I believe that

if we spent more of our time on analysing our services, and their costs, we would pro.ide a better basis for decision-making and perhaps dispel some old fallacies and illusions.

Some surprising facts come to light. For instance, I discovered that if I build a garage for a mobile library it will cost about £7 a week (for loan charges, rates, maintenance, electricity, etc) and one may feel that the service would be better, if instead of building a garage one bought seven or so more books every week. Those librarians who are employed by authorities who indulge in strict target budgeting will know that in practice this choice between alternative expenditures really has to be made.

Broadly speaking management techniques do two things.

The ones I have mentioned previously - programme budgeting, cost/benefit analysis, and operational research - are basically to enable us to make a decision of which activities are most beneficicial and in accordance with our overall objectives.

The other techniques help us, having decided what activities we will pursue, to carry them out effectively and efficiently. These particular techniques are many and varied. I cannot possibly deal with them today, and I shall omit such things as Personnel Selection, Management by objectives, Work study, Job evaluation, and Organisation and methods - though all these are important to the manager. Instead I shall concentrate on one aspect of management - the general style of management which is used. The style of management which we require for managing our mobile libraries is that known as the dynamic rather than the mechanistic type. This dynamic management is essential in an organisation in which the staff is dispersed and where direct supervision is at a minimum. In such a situation it is no good the manager laying down a rigid set of instructions for operating, imposing vehicle's routes which are never, ever, varied, and in allowing the staff the least possible involvement in deciding how

the service shall be stocked, operated and developed. I have seen libraries which operate on this system, however. You can tell them right away. The library staff are uninterested, lethargic, sceptical. All they do is moan about the organisation, or disorganisation, of their library service.

The style of management which we require should be dynamic and it should delegate to the staff as much decision-making as possible. For example, all new books for mobile stock should be selected by the person who does the actual work of meeting the public. By all means give them a quota if necessary, or give them general guidance on the library's overall book-buying policy, but for heaven's sake let them choose their own books.

Another aspect on which the field staff should be directly concerned is the design of their own vehicles. Consultation on this matter is vital, in my experience, if you are going to keep staff happy and interested in their work.

I have dealt with two matters in management style; the first involved delegation, the second involved consultation. Now consultation can only take place if one has communication. This question of communicating is so important. Employees should know what they are doing, what is expected of them, and how they are getting on.

Communication is a two-way transaction. Outwardly, from the base library, we deal with it by the issue of a newsletter (basically weekly) but the difficulty is in getting a return from the recipients. Regular meetings go some way towards this, but with a scattered staff, the problem seems almost insoluble. Without this contact we lose valuable feed-back from the staff.

Broadly speaking, everyone wants to work, and needs to work. Not just for the money, but for the personal satisfaction which is the primary motivation. But the satisfaction is greatest when the work is recognised, not ignored, and when the worker knows that the manager knows just what the worker is doing, and how well he is doing it. It behoves us, as library managers, to make sure that we know and acknowledge what our staff do.

In this respect I am 'getting at' chief librarians, but I should also like to say that mobile staff themselves can do a great deal towards good management - mainly towards helping the problem of communication. If you have any complaints, criticisms and comments on the service then make them. I have known mobile librarians, for example, who continue to make a regular halt at which no readers come into the mobile library without either doing anything to chase up potential users or without notifying me that they wished to alter the route. I have known drivers and librarians who have moaned and complained to one another about some comparatively small grievance which could be removed easily if they had made their problem known elsewhere.

Miss Paulin once said, in discussing staff problems, "People become what you treat them as". This has always stuck in my mind and I have always tried to use it as a guide in dealing with staff. If you treat your staff as irresponsible, immature, limited, irrational - this is what they will become. If you treat them as the opposite - even if you know in your heart that they aren't - I believe, with Miss Paulin, that you can encourage them to maintain or to improve their effectiveness. In my experience staff can rise to responsibility, they can improve with encouragement, and they can rot with being ignored.

These are a few brief ideas on management problems. Hardly any problems are capable of complete solution and often the best we can do is to muddle along in a "rule of thumb" way. Some staff situations are so difficult that they seem completely intractable and sometimes all we seem to be able to do is to ignore them and hope they will go away. This is the worst thing we can do. Our motto for these situations should be "Do something; do right if you can, but do something."

Very few people can say that management is not applicable to them. Remember that every person who has at least one person working for them is a manager.

I have not dealt with the management and administrative consequences of the Transport Act.

There are times when I can scarcely bring myself even to think about it, let alone talk about it, but its implementation has placed a considerable management burden on vehicle operators, for the eventual common good of all.

Finally may I say that as a manager I pin my faith in the future of our library service in the computer, not the electronic model, but the flesh and blood variety, the resources and potential of which are still as yet largely untapped and yet which forms our most valuable asset for the future.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Mobilemeet '69, by P. Jones and A. Booker - - - - 25p

Mobilemeet '71, by M. W. Paton and C. R. Eastwood - - 25p

A Librarian plans a library, by Emily Markwick - - - 25p

Mobile Libraries, design and construction: a survey of current practise, by C. R. Eastwood, C. T. Nicholls and C. Rippon 25p

Productivity in Branch libraries today, and the future, by Ralph Malbon - - - - - - - - 25p

FICTION GUIDES

These guides are intended to help readers in libraries to find their way in the enormous world of novels, and to show what is available in the stock of typical branch libraries. They are selective, not comprehensive, and intended to be sold in large numbers for distribution to readers.

The following guides are available now:

No. 1. Crime Ration.

No. 2. School Novel.

No. 11. West Country Fiction.

No. 13. Modern Scottish Fiction.

No. 14. North-East England.

Prices: Nos. 1, 2, 11, 14: 100 for £2.50, 50 for £1.50
No. 13. 100 for £4, 50 for £2.25

Available from: Hon. Publications Officer, County Branch Library, West Walk, Yate, Bristol.

This guide: SBN: 85365 071 3

Printed by H. E. ILES (Central Press) LTD., 49/51 Downend Road, Kingswood, Bristol.